



## Iowa Board of Physical and Occupational Therapy Guidance Related to Governor Reynold's Proclamations & COVID-19

On March 22, 2020, Governor Kim Reynolds issued a Proclamation of Disaster Emergency. In this Proclamation, Governor Reynolds temporarily suspended a number of regulatory provisions applicable to a number of professions, including physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, occupational therapists and occupational therapist assistants. The Proclamation eases administrative rules relating to renewal of licenses, continuing education, and background checks. *The suspension of rules identified in the Proclamation is effective through May 27, 2020, unless the Governor terminates or extends the Proclamation.* As required in the Proclamation, the Board of Physical and Occupational Therapy issues this guidance relating to the temporary suspension of administrative rules in these areas:

### **License Renewal**

If your license is scheduled to expire while the Proclamation is in effect, you are not required to renew your license for the duration of the Proclamation. You will have 60 days after the Proclamation expires to renew your license without penalty. The Board office is able to process renewal applications at this time, so you may renew your license online while the Proclamation is in effect.

### **Continuing Education**

Any Board rules that require you to complete any continuing education in-person are waived for your next license renewal, regardless of when your license expires.

### **Background Checks**

If you apply for a license that requires a background check, your application will be processed prior to performing the background check for the duration of the Proclamation. You will still be sent a fingerprint packet after you submit your application, but you do not need to return the completed fingerprint packet until after the expiration of the Proclamation. You will have 60 days after the Proclamation expires to return your completed fingerprint packet to the Board office.

Physical Therapists and Physical Therapist Assistants only—Note that you will not be eligible for PT Compact privileges as an Iowa licensee until the background check is completed.

**The Board office has received several questions regarding telehealth and is providing the following information to all licensees:**

Section 9 of the Governor's Proclamation issued on March 17 eases rules that establish preconditions, limitations, or restrictions on the provision of telehealth services and other administrative rules that require face-to-face interactions with health care providers. This is intended to suspend rules that may require a physical interaction prior to utilizing telehealth or otherwise restrict the types of services or manner of services that can be provided via telehealth. The Board's rules on telehealth do not impose any such requirements—therefore, this Section has no effect on the Board's rules.

Section 3 of the Governor's Proclamation issued on March 26 directs the Insurance Commissioner to ensure that any health carrier reimburses a health care professional for covered services via telehealth. The Board is unable to answer questions about what therapy services may be reimbursable.

The federal government has relaxed HIPAA to the extent it has minimum technological requirements for telehealth. Under the relaxed requirements, providers may use non-public facing communication applications that may otherwise not be HIPAA-compliant. Iowa licensed providers may utilize the technologies described in the Office for Civil Rights (part of HHS) announcement on March 17, 2020, which includes the use of FaceTime, Google Hangouts video, and Skype.

Section 7 of the Governor's April 24, 2020 Proclamation temporarily suspended regulatory provisions that required Iowa licensure for providing physical therapy and occupational therapy services to patients located in Iowa. Accordingly, a physical therapist or occupational therapist who holds an active license in another state may provide telehealth or electronic services to patients located in Iowa.

**Personal Protective Equipment**

The Iowa Department of Public Health has issued orders and gathered resources to assist healthcare workers with providing in-person services during this public health disaster emergency. Prior to performing in-person services, please review this information and ensure that you are complying with all orders and appropriate guidance to safeguard the safety of yourself and your patients: <https://idph.iowa.gov/Emerging-Health-Issues/Novel-Coronavirus/Healthcare>.